THE SIXTEEN SULFURS OF ERÄMETSÄ

In the years between '58 and '63

O. Erämetsä reported them in German

in Suomen Kemistilehti; yellowish

gray, red, lilac, orange, black

pine-needle shaped crystals pre-

cipitating out of organic solvents.

Chance took a hand: ø-sulfur grew

out of a-pinene solution one cold

winter day when the lab temperature

fell to 80C. I see Erämetsä at work

for long hours, trying for t-sulfur

which was obtained only three times

in 5000 crystallizations. I imagine

him in gloomy November, extracting

sulfur with carbon disulfide, heating

residues, washing, drying, putting

them on silica gel, taking X-ray

powder diagrams. I wonder if

somewhere on his lab bench

there lay a diminished sampo,

the machine that Vainamoinen,

the Finnish Orpheus, searched for.

It lay hidden in the strange land

of the Woman of the North. Heroes

died for it. Grinding out prosperity

for men, making all things near

take on miraculous shape. Even sulfur.

*This owes much to J. Donohue "The Structure of*

*the Elements", R. E. Krieger, Malabar, 1982.*